

# BIG SANDY NEWS.

## A BARBARIC DANCE.

A STRANGE CEREMONY WITNESSED  
IN A MOQUI PUEBLO

A Procession—Throng of Zunis, Navas, and Moquis—Introductory Performances—Blood-Curdling Spectacle—“Snake Dance.”

Covering the rooftops and even upon every available ladder was gathered a miscellaneous throng, unis from their village far to the southward, away or from their reservation near by, Moquis from the pueblos on the other mesas, near to the one on which we were and the dwellers of the town, whose houses we had been exploring. The costumes were quaint and often peculiar, Indian, bright red blankets, gathered gracefully about the more forms being the most conspicuous part of the dress, though the children were clothed only in such garments as nature had provided.

At last when the red hot sun had sunk nearly to the tops of the blue hills an Indian scene in miniature visible in the distance across the sea-like plains, the dance began and the eyes of all present were fastened upon the little inclosure at our feet. First to make their appearance were fifteen dancers, who marched in single file into the square and then began a rather monotonous walk around a huge, time-carved pillar of stone. They were hideously painted from head to foot and naked except for a tunic of reddish cloth worn about the waist. A man wore a foxskin cap or crown behind and fastened to his back and carried a rattle made of a gourd covered with a piece of dried skin. All were provided with baskets containing sacred meal and wore strings of antelope hoofs about their ankles, so that every step produced a rattling sound. The long inky line of the men was filled with eagle feathers.

PART I.

In front of where I stood was a bower made of cottonwood trees, and in this the snakes that were to be used had been placed a short time before the ceremony began. As the first dancers passed this the stampede started on the ground and sprinkled a handful of meal after which a line was formed before the bower and a song and dance given, which consisted of a slow movement of the body sideways, a slight raising of the foot, and the utterance of short, dog-like barks accompanied by the sound given by the rattles. The chief attraction which this so-called dance, which is always given by action Indians, has is the unison with which the performers move. The action grows more vigorous as the time passes and at length the excitement caused the men to raise their voices to a cry that is high-pitched, shrill and extremely weird.

As this particular dance was at its height another party, numbering over fifty in all, filed rapidly into the inclosure and began a brisk march around the elbow-hued rock, near which so many ceremonies have been held during the unknown centuries that the snake dance has been held. They were dressed in nearly similar style to their predecessors but their faces and bodies were more thickly painted and, instead of meal and rattles, they carried wands made of eagle feathers. These were the chief performers of the day, and their advent was hailed with rapturous delight by the assembled people. Finish-

ing their march, they formed in line opposite the first party, now boisterously dancing and singing, and began themselves, the wild chant and slow lifting of feet. The spectacle now presented was weird in the extreme, the half-naked and painted bodies of the men contrasting strangely with their rudely made ornaments and the shrill notes of the song rising high above the paean of the people.

And now the snake dance began in earnest. At a given signal the members of the second party made a rush for the bower containing the snakes and in a moment each performer had provided himself with a living, rattling, hissing, biting snake. Grasping the hideous reptile between his teeth and holding it firmly the dancer began a slow walk around the standing stone. In time there were fifty men thus decorated and, in a long file, they began moving slowly about the open square, each snake-holder being tended by an Indian who brushed the reptile's head with his eagle feather wand. As the dancers passed a certain point where stood a group of Indian maidens, dressed in bright red shawls, and with their hair festooned about the heads in curious coils, they were deluged with sacred meal.

Now and then a snake got away and caused a general stampede among the lookers-on and often a man was severely bitten by the venomous serpent that he held in full, half an hour the hideous sport went on, the dancers growing every moment more excited and the song of the first party louder, while before us were the twisting forms of the snakes lashing the vines around their captives' necks biting, snarling, hissing. The spectacle was horrific in the extreme, blood-curdling to look upon, disgusting to think about. There were over 100 snakes altogether, and among them were the most venomous known in the country. They were caught during the four days preceding the fete, and the dance is commonly supposed to be part of a religious ceremony of great antiquity.

After the dance ended the snakes were thrown together in a common pile, where they twisted and turned and later at a signal a second rush was made and again each man secured one or more reptiles, which he held in his hand and with which he ran rapidly down the mesa's narrow trail to the valley below, where the snakes were set at liberty.

### Loss of Library Books.

About 1,000 volumes are condemned every year in the public library. Ninety-five percent of these are works of fiction. These books were formerly sold to rag houses for old paper, but they are now donated to hospitals and jails. They are condemned because of mutilation, either in the loss of leaves or defacement by bad scribblers. A great number, however, are condemned because of their filthy condition.

The utter filthiness of some books after they have been in circulation several years is almost incredible. Not only are the covers and edges incrusted with dirt, but the surfaces of nearly all the pages are rendered almost illegible by reason of the accumulated grime. To add to this the books are living, crawling entomological cabinets, the specimens being collected from thousands of households in the city. It is related that certain popular works of fiction are so alive that they hop out of the shelves and visit each other. Mr. Wickham, the secretary in authority for the story, that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been trained to leave its place and come to the desk whenever it is called for.

### Match Making in Brief.

I. o.

Nearly all the operations of match making are now carried on by machinery. The wood is first sawed into blocks of uniform length, usually two and a half inches long, or the length of the match. These blocks are then fed into the cutting machine, which cuts twelve matches at every stroke. To make round matches the wood is forced through perforations in metal plates. The splinters are then pushed into slots arranged on a double chain 50 feet long. On this they are carried to the sulphur vat, dipped therein by a mechanical movement, and then in the same manner to the phosphorus vat and dipped. Machines are used for making the boxes and packing the splints therein.

As the consumption of matches is most enormous—being estimated at six a day for every man, woman and child in Europe and North America—they form an important article of commerce, and the invention of machinery for their manufacture has proved of great advantage. But the especial value of machinery is that it has so largely reduced the mortality caused by working over the phosphorus. This substance, when heated, throws off fume, which cannot be continuously breathed without causing disease. In large factories 144,000 small boxes of matches are often made and packed ready for shipping in a single day.

### In the Spanish Postoffice.

I. o.

The art of opening letters addressed to other people and refraining from so that no one will know is a Roman art. In the post offices they have a dark chamber where experts inquire into things, and these have long since given up the use of steam for opening gummed envelopes. Even red-hot platinum wire for letters sealed with wax is out of date. The favorite means is said to be with a knife sharper than a razor, which is run along the bottom of the envelope. The letter having been extracted and then placed after the address of the post office have learned what is going on, a line of cement is drawn along the opening, the slightest pressure conceivable is applied, and lo! the letter is as whole as ever.

### Boring Toward the Central Fire.

Excerpt

The Review Ciel et Terre states that the German government has just completed at Schladbach, a little village between Leipzig and Corbeta, the deepest boring into the surface of the earth that has yet been accomplished. The shaft sunk reached a depth of 1,300 meters, where the heat was found to be 120 degrees. If the temperature increases at this rate it is reckoned that water would boil at a depth of 4,000 meters, and that at 44 miles platinum would melt.

### A New Instrument.

A saw and a pole.

A new scientific apparatus for measuring distances—the "telepometer"—has been devised by Professor Cerebotani of Verona, and is being exhibited in London. Its principle is that known to surveyors as "triangulation," but the essential base-line is so shortened as to be contained in the instrument itself, while a set of tables enables the observer to read off quite accurately the distance or height of any object in view without trigonometrical calculation.